

- **Posted** July 17, 2013
- [Tweet This](#) | [Share on Facebook](#)

## Surveys aim at improving public's experience with courts

---

“Finding the courthouse was easy.” “The way the case was handled was fair.” “As I leave the court, I understand what happened in my case.” These are some of the items in a public satisfaction survey that Michigan trial courts will administer to improve public service.

The survey, which was tested last month in a pilot project, asks participants to share their experiences with access to the court and the fairness of court proceedings. The results will be used to help individual courts find and improve weak areas, such as long waits at customer service counters or a judge’s need to explain rulings more clearly.

State Court Administrator Chad C. Schmucker said the surveys are part of a statewide initiative, “Courts working smarter for a better Michigan,” which stresses measuring court performance to improve efficiency and public service.

“Can you measure the quality of justice? Maybe not, but we can and should measure how well the courts are serving the public, in part by asking the people who use the courts about their experiences,” Schmucker said.

A video released today by the Supreme Court Office of Public Information explains how the survey results will be used. “The Measure of Service,” part of the Office of Public Information’s Court Stories series, features judges who have already tested the survey including Oakland County Circuit Court Chief Judge Nanci J. Grant, Kent County 62B District Court Chief Judge William G. Kelly, and Kent County 63rd District Court Chief Judge Sara J. Smolenski.

Courts will invite visitors to complete the survey before leaving. The surveys are anonymous. The form asks participants to respond “strongly agree,” “agree,” “neutral,” “disagree,”

“strongly disagree,” or “not applicable” to a series of 15 statements. The survey asks participants “What kind of case brought you to the courthouse today?” and “What did you do at court today?” with participants choosing from a list of responses. The survey also invites participants to add comments.

The State Court Administrative Office will analyze the data, which will be posted online beginning in May 2014.

The information will be used to help courts identify areas where they need to improve the public’s experience, said Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Robert P. Young, Jr.

“The private sector has long used performance measurement, including customer satisfaction surveys, as a way to improve service,” Young said. “Why should it be any different for the courts, particularly when they have such an important impact on the public? We need to hear from the people who use the courts, and we should share the results with the public.”

For additional information about the customer satisfaction survey and the “Courts working smarter for a better Michigan” campaign, see <http://www.courts.mi.gov/Administration/admin/op/performance/Pages/default.aspx>.